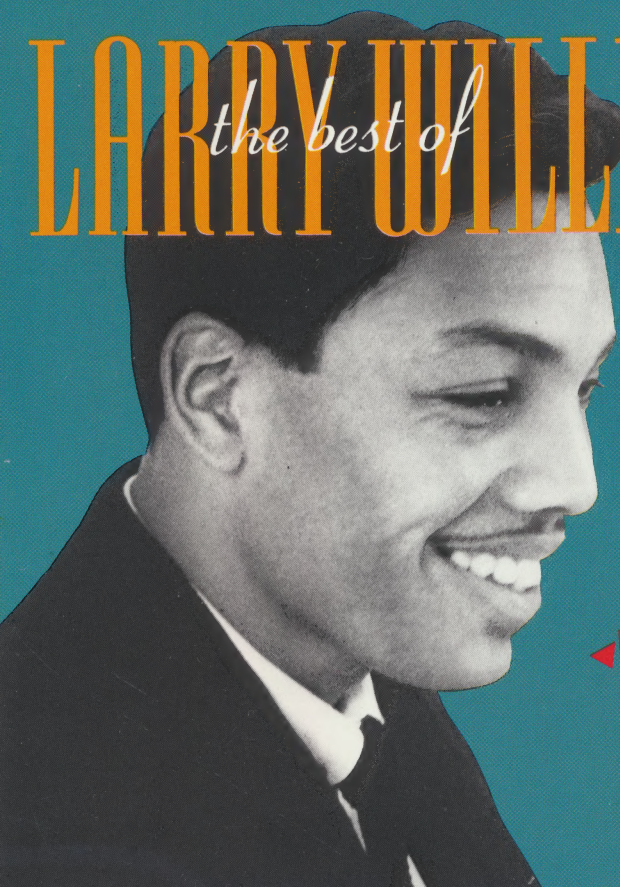


LARRY WILLIAMS

the best of



Specialty



Specialty

1. **SHORT FAT FANNIE** (L Williams) © 1957
2. **BABY'S CRAZY** © 1987
3. **DIZZY MISS LIZZIE** (L Williams) © 1957
4. **LAWDY MISS CLAWDY** (L Price) © 1958
5. **SLOW DOWN** (L Williams) © 1957
6. **I WAS A FOOL TO LET YOU GO** (L Williams) © 1987
7. **YOU BUG ME BABY** (Williams, Bono) © 1987
8. **ROCKIN' PNEUMONIA & THE BOOGIE WOOGIE 'FLU**
(Smith, Vincent) with ART NEVILLE © 1987
9. **SHE SAID "YEAH"** (Jackson, Bono) © 1958
10. **HOOTCHY-KOO** (L Williams) © 1958
11. **BONY MORONIE** (L Williams) © 1957
12. **LITTLE SCHOOL GIRL** (L Williams) © 1958
13. **JUST BECAUSE** (L Price) © 1957
14. **HOCUS POCUS** © 1987
15. **TOOK A TRIP** © 1987
16. **JELLY BELLY NELLIE** © 1987
17. **MAKE A LITTLE LOVE** (L Williams) © 1958
18. **PEACHES AND CREAM** (L Williams) © 1958
19. **OH BABE** © 1987
20. **ZING ZING** (A Neville) © 1987
21. **THE DUMMY** (L Williams) © 1958
22. **BAD BOY** (L Williams) © 1958

All sources are vintage MONO recordings from the early 1950s.

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Made In West Germany

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Compiled by Ted Carroll
Package designed by Martin Brown at S.E.E.
Photographs courtesy of Specialty Records, Inc

"Larry Williams didn't know whether he wanted to be a pimp or a musician" his first producer, Robert "Bumps" Blackwell" has been quoted as saying. "If he had made up his mind, he would've been much bigger than he was."

Williams grew up in New Orleans, where he learned the piano, and then moved during his teens to Oakland, California with his family. His Crescent City-style piano playing made him stand out amongst local musicians as a result. He is usually thought to have been born on 10th May 1935, although "Bumps" Blackwell believed that Williams was born earlier.

In 1954, Lloyd Price hired Williams as his pianist and personal valet and consequently introduced Larry to Bumps Blackwell, the legendary producer. At the time, Blackwell & Art Rupe, head of Specialty Records, were unimpressed. However when Price returned from military service in 1956, Specialty had not been keen on his choice of material and he left the label. Price then recorded the song 'Just



Because' himself, and licensed it to ABC Paramount. Rupe and Blackwell wanted to quickly do a cover version of the song, and Blackwell remembered Williams. In 2 days Williams had rehearsed and recorded the number, it was mastered, pressed and distributed. It didn't get as far up the charts as Lloyd Price's version, but it did sufficient business for Specialty to continue to record Larry Williams.

His first proper session, backed by some of Little Richard's studio band, at Master Recorders, included the self-penned 'Short Fat Fannie'. This was released and went to No 5 on the Top 40 Billboard chart in 1957, selling over a million copies as a result.

Blackwell left Specialty, and Williams took over his own sessions. At the suggestion of Art Rupe, the owner of Specialty, he wrote a song about a skinny girl, 'Bony Moronie' next and that too charted – at No 14 – and also sold extremely well. With two hits Williams began to headline concerts – as Bumps Blackwell said "He was not a



1958 - Freed, Larry Williams, Ben Costa, Holly

great musician, but he was a natural. He had a great personality and he could handle an audience."

His third stab in the novelty field, 'Dizzy Miss Lizzie' had all the qualities of another hit, but it went no further than 69.

In 1958 Williams recorded again at Cosimo Matassa's studio in New Orleans, but nothing emerged that made major impact on the charts. Specialty released a total of 6 singles in 1959 and an album "Here's Larry Williams" but without much effect. By now the rock'n'roll drive was being replaced by the teen idols, and ballads with chorus or strings became the order of the day. Williams recorded a few of these sweet ballads, although his voice was not suited for crooning.

No more hits and an arrest on narcotics charges led to Specialty dropping Williams in early 1959. He moved on to Chess and had a minor hit. His next record failed to make headway and he

moved again, to Mercury this time, where nothing happened either.

He then teamed up with his old friend Johnny 'Guitar' Watson and went on tour to Great Britain. Island Records issued recordings of the live show as an LP and a single, while Decca also released a live LP "The Larry Williams' Show".

In 1966 Williams became a producer at Okeh and in 1967 he re-hashed his hits on an LP released by the label. Then he teamed-up with Johnny Watson again and together they had a moderate selling LP and 2 discs in the R&B charts.

That was about it, musically. In 1979 he recorded his last record, for Fantasy Records, which were also re-makes of his old hits.

Williams lived an opulent lifestyle, not entirely explained by the royalties garnered from the Beatles' cover-versions of 'Dizzy Miss Lizzie', 'Slow Down', 'Bad Boy' and Lennon's version of 'Bony Moronie'.



His main sources of income were hard drugs and prostitutes. Bumps Blackwell's doubts about his age originated because he knew Williams was "in the sportin' life" (pimping) and at least 26 when he first met him in '57. There is little doubt that he was into dealing both cocaine and heroin, and so it comes as little suprise to find that his death was a violent one. He was found dead in his luxury house by his mother. Whether or not he was murdered or he shot himself is not known. His family think he was either murdered by criminals in the drug world or by a Los Angeles Police Department hit squad.

Luckily his music is his testament – not his lifestyle. The music featured here is truly his "very best", being the cream of his recording career between 1957-9 together with some fascinating recordings made during that period, but only recently reissued on Ace Records.

CAROL FAWCETT 1988

with acknowledgments to the sleeve notes of Jim Dawson & Ray Topping

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for publishing details
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MONO
CDCH 917



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